

March 3, 2021

The Honorable Gary A. Winfield
The Honorable Steven J. Stafstrom
The Honorable Alex Kasser
The Honorable Matt Blumenthal
The Honorable John A. Kissel
The Honorable Craig C. Fishbein
Joint Committee on Judiciary
Connecticut General Assembly
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Raised Bill No. 6321: An Act Concerning Adoption and Implementation of the Connecticut Parentage Act

Dear Chairs Stafstrom and Winfield, Vice Chairs Kasser and Blumenthal, Ranking Members Kissel and Fishbein, and Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Ashley Taylor, and I am testifying in support of **Raised Bill No. 6321: An Act Concerning Adoption and Implementation of the Connecticut Parentage Act**. I am a resident of Bridgeport and a police officer in the city. I'm testifying on behalf of myself and my fiancée, Adriana, who is also a Bridgeport police officer.

Adriana and I are currently expecting a child, due in mere weeks. However, we are also extremely nervous about Adriana's legal parentage status. Despite being my partner and co-parent in every sense of the word, Adriana will have no legal connection to our child at birth because she is not a biological parent. Rather, due to Connecticut's outdated and burdensome parentage laws, we will have to go through the months-long process of a second-parent adoption to ensure that Adriana is legally secured as our child's other parent.

After forming a committed partnership, Adriana and I decided we were ready to build a family together. At first, we decided that I would carry the child through in-vitro fertilization (IVF), but that we would use Adriana's eggs. We went through months of fertility injections and medications and egg retrieval unsuccessfully.

We were doing IVF so that we could both contribute to the process—me as the birth mother and Adriana as the genetic mother. We were shocked to learn that if we had been successful with this process, the State of Connecticut would not issue us a birth certificate listing both of us as parents. Instead, the state would treat me as a surrogate, even though I would be carrying a child that I intended to raise with my partner. We know that courts in other states, from Florida to California, have rejected this treatment as a violation of family law principles and constitutional law. Yet it continues in Connecticut.

After the disappointment of the IVF process, we restarted our journey through intrauterine insemination (IUI). This means that Adriana has no genetic connection to the child. Unfortunately, I suffered a miscarriage with my first pregnancy, right as the pandemic first hit. My second pregnancy was not viable. Finally, I am pregnant again. We are obviously still cautious, but excited about the prospect of welcoming our first child.

Since we live in a state that we think of as supportive of LGBT people, we just assumed that we would both be recognized as parents under Connecticut law. Throughout the fertility process, we have been

treated by doctors and nurses as a couple who are both parents. And we jointly signed contracts and forms at the clinic in which we both committed to responsibility over any child we have. But, under the law, we would not be treated as parents of our children, regardless of any forms we sign with the fertility center. Adriana will have no legal connection to our child. In order for her to be legally recognized as our child's mother, we would have to go to court to obtain an adoption. When I called the Bridgeport Probate Court, I was told to wait until our baby is born to start the process of Adriana adopting our child. It will cost roughly \$2,000 to \$3,000 in lawyer's fees, so we are hoping to do it on our own without lawyers.

Even if we are successful, there will be a period of time when Adriana is not a legal parent to our child. This makes me scared, and my fears are only compounded by the instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. What if I'm not around? What if I'm incapacitated? Whether or not Adriana is recognized as our child's parent and allowed to be there for our child in critical moments shouldn't be left to chance. We shouldn't simply have to rely on the kindness of strangers. We need the law to support out families.

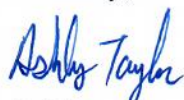
Any pregnancy is incredibly stressful and scary. I've gone through two failed pregnancies in the last year. As a same-sex couple, it is even harder for us than a heterosexual couple to have children. It is unbelievably stressful and exhausting to go through the fertility process: we both had to miss work, take medications that make us feel sick, and fork over thousands of dollars—all with no guarantee that any of it would work out. Imagine, then, being faced with the additional uncertainty of your partner not having legal rights to the child unless you go to court and pay more money. I'm not surprised that many unmarried same-sex couples with children in Connecticut put off the formal adoption process indefinitely. And, of course, many same-sex couples may not realize they have to adopt their own children.

Some, of course, would argue that couples like me and Adriana should just get married. While we're engaged and do plan on getting married, heterosexual couples don't have to marry to both be treated as parents. And unmarried heterosexual couples don't have to adopt their own children in order to become legal parents. Many unmarried heterosexual couples in Connecticut are raising children together. Many of these children are not the result of deliberate planning by the couple. Adriana and I are a committed couple who decided to go through the difficult and years-long process of having and raising a child together. We want to share our lives together, and a marriage will not change that. We shouldn't be forced to marry or go through adoption to prove we are family.

The Connecticut Parentage Act would protect our family and guarantee that our child has the security of two legal parents from the moment of birth. The bill will allow us to sign a simple Voluntary Acknowledgement of Parentage to guarantee that Adriana would be our baby's mother, always and forever. We wouldn't have to go through months of uncertainty and expense waiting for formal adoptions—months where Adriana wouldn't be able to visit her own child in the hospital or make medical decisions for our child. We would be recognized as a family from Day 1.

Adriana and I urge you to adopt this bill and show that *all* families are equal under our law. As police officers, we are so proud to put on our uniforms every day and protect and serve the citizens of Connecticut. We put our lives on the line to make our communities a safer place. All that we ask in return is that Connecticut's laws recognize our family as just as legitimate and deserving of respect as any other family in the state.

Sincerely,



Ashley Taylor